

Congressman Jo Bonner, R-Alabama, offered his support to a compromise amendment to the FY 2011 National Defense Authorization Act which subjects both bidders in the Air Force KC-X tanker contest to unfair competitive advantage evaluations.

Congressman Bonner spoke on the House floor during the debate over the Inslee/DeLauro/Tiahrt Amendment to the defense bill declaring he would vote for the bill but that Congress needs to tread carefully so as not to interfere with the long-delayed tanker competition.

“This amendment, as it has been revised, is far superior to the form in which it existed last night,” Bonner said, referring to the bill’s original wording that was submitted to the House Rules Committee. “The amendment now applies in an even-handed way to both competitors in the tanker competition and for that reason, I think we have made this amendment better.”

On Tuesday, Rep. Bonner called on House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to block the amendment in its original form due to its bias against bidder EADS North America.

“Congress needs to be very careful that we do not inadvertently build obstacles or additional delay into the program. After all, our warfighters have waited long enough,” Rep. Bonner said.

“And we must be extremely careful that we maintain a level playing field that is essential for a vigorous competition. We all know competition will dramatically increase the odds of a better tanker at a better price and there are only two companies in the world that qualify to build these tankers.

“Those of us who support the EADS bid have argued long and hard for a level playing field on which to compete. We have never asked that you give us the contract – just that you give us a fair chance to compete for it. Some on the other side, however, seem to fear a fair competition and are resorting to all sorts of smear tactics to try to end up with a sole-source contract signed by the American taxpayer.

In response to Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Washington, and the other Boeing supporters who argued that the EADS has received subsidies from European countries, Congressman Bonner countered on the House floor Thursday:

“...Within weeks the WTO should be able to consider the complaint of the European Union against Boeing. And to that point, \$16.6 billion in R&D subsidies have been recorded for Boeing, versus \$3.7 billion for Airbus, \$2 billion in export-related tax subsidies, \$6 billion in local and state government subsidies, and \$2 billion in foreign government subsidies for moving manufacturing jobs out of your state, my friend, into Japan and to Italy.”

“For the good of the warfighter—and the taxpayer—we must maintain the competitive balance and I am pleased this amendment now does so.”